

Deal made to return Silvia Baraldini to Italy!

(Further details next issue or check www.justice-for-silvia.org)

OUT OF TIME

Issue No. 48

Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners

June 1999

LAURA WHITEHORN: Arrested 1985: 20 years; release August 1999: armed actions against the u.s. government - protesting attacks on liberation struggles in El Salvador, the Middle East, Africa, Puerto Rico and inside mainland u.s. Laura is a lesbian.

Artist Statement: For many years I've used graphic arts for political agitation - to try to build campaigns for human rights and justice. During my years in prison, art has given me a way to reach out through the walls - to tell the community outside what goes on in here, and to participate in important struggles like the fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal. While I was in the hole for about a year, I started drawing as a way to reclaim my humanity and creativity in a situation of isolation and brutality. I began using cancelled stamps in my art when the AIDS stamp came out, around 1993: the government was doing nothing to stop the epidemic, and when I saw that red ribbon and "29" it just infuriated me. For a prisoner, whose communication with the world outside happens through the mail, using stamps in art is a case of "use what you've got to get what you need." Part of what I've needed is color in my life inside a steel-bars-and-khaki-uniforms environment.

I'm in prison (since 1985) on political charges: taking armed action against the us to protest the government's attacks on liberation struggles in El Salvador, the rest of Central America, the Middle East, Africa, Puerto Rico and inside the mainland u.s. (one of the actions was in response to racist police in NYC). I'm scheduled for "mandatory release" in August, 99.

(note from OOC: We regret that due to electronic difficulties we are unable to print Laura's stamp art work.)



Linda Evan's "Red Dragons Will Fly Out" quilt.

Linda's and Laura's art is on exhibit with other prisoners' art at "What is Art For? Beyond Bars." Oakland Museum, 10th & Oak Street, now thru July 25, 1999.

Women on Death Row

Conditions for women on death row in Texas have gotten worse since the attempted escape from the men's death row at Ellis Unit, some 180 miles away. The women have been subjected to harsh rule and policy changes designed to discourage escape attempts. There is no reasonable justification for the changed treatment: there have been no escapes, no violence, no threats of violence, and no riots in Gatesville.

It appears that prison authorities are trying to break their will to live. This is what torture is for: to break the body, break the spirit, break the mind, then break the will to live. The women are scheduled to die and they could move up that timetable by giving up their appeals.

The crackdown includes: Strip searches up to eight times per day; Increased number of cell searches; Interruption of night time sleep; Reduction of recreation time and human contact; Removal of furniture, craft items, and craft tools from cells; Destruction of property; Unsanitary conditions; No water fountains for drinking water; No windows for ventilation; A new policy of handcuffing women prisoners when they are taken from cells; Grievances regarding changed conditions are ignored.

The worsening condition for women on Texas death row is not simply a fairness issue. The standard for treatment of prisoners has a well-established history among civilized nations. Nations have agreed that the long-term care of prisoners includes fresh air, exercise, activities, prompt access to dental, medical, and mental health care, sanitation, enough rest and food. Isolation and solitary confinement can

LINDA EVANS: Arrested 1982- 40 years; release 2009: armed actions against u.s. imperialism (Zionism and white supremacy) and in solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence, Black Liberation and worldwide national liberation struggles. Linda is a lesbian and political prisoner.

Artist Statement: I have always believed that creating alternative revolutionary culture is crucial to building and sustaining a struggle for liberation. For many years I was a musician in a women's band and an actor in a street theater troupe. We used music and performance art to educate, agitate and organize a political resistance movement. But I realized that it is too easy for people to listen passively to protest music and laugh comfortably at plays without taking radical action themselves. Then and now I wanted my art to entertain but also to motivate people to fight for justice and freedom. I believe that building a revolutionary culture is only possible in the context of a revolutionary struggle. So, I have devoted my life to organizing an anti-racist, internationalist resistance movement.

In 1985 I was arrested and sentenced to 40 years in prison for armed actions against US imperialism, against Zionism and white supremacy, actions in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence, Black Liberation and struggles for national liberation around the world.

Since my arrest, art has kept my spirit free. In our bleak, colorless, monotonous surroundings my quilts and needlework give me infinite color and texture. The joy of creating and finishing a project is matched by the joy of giving quilts as gifts or as an expression of solidarity. I have discovered art as survival, stimulation and challenge in an atmosphere designed to deaden both mind and heart. And I've learned to appreciate the art created by my fellow prisoners, born out of their experiences and diverse cultures. Art makes my life rich and defies prison's repression.

For more info contact: www.prisonactivist.org or Out of Control.

bring on depression or psychosis, and so should be avoided. Instead, there should be programs that provide necessary human contact, and mental and spiritual stimulation that would ameliorate the damaging effects of facing death. The harsh and arbitrary treatment of these women in custody violates international standards and the 1983 death row plan in Texas Civil Action Number H-78-987.

"We are women not animals or even troublemakers. I refuse to let my heart become hard because of my surroundings so I pray daily for acceptance. Please write letters to Governor Bush and the Warden and anyone else you feel might be of help and demand that we be granted the same human rights we demand of other countries."

Write, Warden Pamela Baggett, Mountain View Unit Rt. 4, Box 800, Gatesville, TX 76528 Phone: 254-865-7226

For more info, Mary Robinson Editor, Women SpeakOut Magazine, P.O. Box 405, Onalaska, TX 77360-0405. www.whateverdesign/speakout

Out of Time
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The United States spends more on prisons and incarcerates more people than any other industrialized country in the world. Over five million are in prison, on parole or probation, or are incarcerated in INS detention centers.

As a woman, a lesbian, and a socialist, I've always seen fighting for my own liberation as integral to this process.



The American Correctional Association in a 1987 survey of 200 jails found that only 47% of the jails allowed contact visits between incarcerated women and their children. In California, only 8 out of a total of 56 county jail systems offer a special parent/child extended contact visitation program.

She has been in prison for 17 years

My name is Silvia Baraldini and this is the end of my 16th year in an American prison.

Women political prisoners are strong not only to take on this fight against the government but because we give up so much more. Our children are bearing this grief, hurt and pain just as we are and more. We are strong just the same because this fight is for our children as well.

In the last four years I have become a teacher.

Women prisoners spend on average 17 hours a day in their cell with 1 hour outside for exercise. Compare to men prisoners who spent on average 15 hours a day in their cell with one-and-a half hours outside.

Merle Africa, political prisoner and revolutionary activist member of the MOVE organization, died under suspicious circumstances in a Pennsylvania prison on March 13 after nearly twenty years of unjust imprisonment.

Dylcia and her son Guillermo



On the MOVE

Many people don't know that there are political prisoners in the United States and especially don't know about women political prisoners and don't want to believe it even if they are told this

My passion is the potter's wheel which keeps me true to my center.

OUT OF TIME

Amnesty for Independistas

In March, the three Puerto Rican congressional representatives asked the president's counsel, Charles Ruff, for a meeting to discuss the petition for the pardon of the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners. Ruff is the chief of the legal division of the White House and makes the pardon recommendations to the President.

Luis Gutiérrez, Nydia Velázquez, and José Serrano emphasized that the liberation of the prisoners is a matter of great urgency and justice. Those who favor the liberation of the prisoners are lobbying vice-president Al Gore to intercede in favor of the pardon. Following the defeat of statehood in the 1998 plebiscite, the pardon of the prisoners is the request some Puerto Rican democrats are making of Gore in exchange for supporting him in his presidential campaign. Some leaders from New York hope that the prisoners will be free by March 7, 2000 by the time of the New York primaries.

The main argument of the pardon petition is that the 15 independistas have been in prison more than 18 years. The length of time in prison is excessive for the offenses for which these independistas were convicted. In general, even those convicted of murder are released after serving less than 18 years in prison.

The petition for presidential pardon enjoys the support of eleven active or former members of Congress, former President Carter, several Nobel Laureates, the heads of several U.S. churches, leaders of all three political parties in Puerto Rico, and others. The congressional representatives indicated that more than 100,000 people from the United States and Puerto Rico have asked the President to pardon the political prisoners.

There is a continuing need for phone calls 202-456-1111, faxes 202-456-2883, and e-mails President@WhiteHouse.gov to President Clinton in support of the campaign. Some upcoming events include: July 22-25, activities in Washington, DC, including lobbying, press conferences, civil disobedience, rally, ecumenical service. On July 27, 10 PM EDT, "The Double Life of Ernesto Gomez Gomez", story of the son of Puerto Rican prisoner of war Dylcia Pagán, to be aired on PBS (check local listings).

For more info about amnesty, contact Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, 2687 W. Division St. Chicago, IL 60622 or prpowpp@aol.com

MUMIA: A CALL TO DIRECT ACTION

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has denied Mumia's final appeal. While his lawyers are now going to the federal courts, his chances there are slim thanks to President Clinton's 1996 Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which drastically limits the federal courts' powers to review death cases. Mumia's only hope for a new and fair trial is if we can mobilize a bigger, broader, stronger, louder, more determined movement.

On Saturday, July 3, the anniversary of Mumia's death sentence, International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia is calling for civil disobedience at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. Here in San Francisco, an Independence for Mumia Day festive parade will gather at the Federal Building at noon, proceed to Union Square, and end with a direct action.

Direct Action for Mumia Abu-Jamal (DAMAJ), a coalition of groups and individuals including LAGAI and FireWorx is planning a campaign of direct action and legal demonstrations over the next several months while Mumia's last round of appeals are pending in the federal court system.

For more information in San Francisco call 415-431-3594; fireworx@igc.org . Contact International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143; www.Mumia.org.



Commissary \$\$ Needed

Except for the 'food' served in the cafeteria, prisoners must buy everything they want or need at the Commissary; shampoo, aspirin, Tampax, toothpaste, ice cream or granola. The government provides nothing, not deodorant, shoelaces, barrettes, chapstick, dental floss, cotton swabs, nothing! All the little things that we take for granted, including treats, must be purchased. Prisoners also must pay for any clothing other than prison required uniforms. CARE packages are no longer allowed. Some prisoners must pay for phone calls (no collect calls allowed) and postage stamps. Their ability to stay in touch with family and friends is limited by the amount of money available to them. Prisoners who are able to work earn less than a dollar/hour, yet commissary prices are comparable to what we pay on the outside.

In 1990, Out of Control (OOC) and Lesbian and GAY Insurrection (LAGAI), started a Commissary Fund for women political prisoners and Prisoners of War (POWs). In addition to exposing the existence of political prisoners in the u.s. we feel a commitment to materially support the women inside. The primary source of income for the fund is Sparks Fly, a cultural/educational event produced by a collaboration of women, celebrating International Day of Solidarity with Women Political Prisoners and held in the fall.

We usually have one more event to carry the Fund through the year. We are hoping this appeal will bring in enough money that we won't have to do Phone Banking or a Garage Sale, our previous methods of raising funds. WE NEED YOUR HELP! No amount is too small to be appreciated.

Currently there are 11 women political prisoners and POWs who receive money from the Fund. Some are in federal institutions, i.e. FCI Dublin CA, FCI Danbury CT, and others are in state prison around the country. This past year we have been able to send 4 women \$60./month. Each woman receives money from us 3X/year. All the women need the money for their basic survival. The 6 women at FCI Dublin, for example, need the money just to make phone calls, to lawyers, to friends, to family.

A contribution to the Commissary Fund will allow these women to have access to their communities and make necessary purchases. A donation of \$10 buys, for example, vitamins (\$3.85), Ivory soap (\$2.10), a small package of mixed dried fruit (\$3.15) and emory boards (\$.80).

Women political prisoners and POWs are our sisters. They need our support.

I am donating \$5. \$10. \$20. \$_____

Name _____
Address _____

Please make checks payable to Commissary Fund and mail c/o 3543 18th St. Box 30. S.F. CA 94110

Still COINTELPRO

University Professor, Jose Solis is the latest casualty of the FBI's dirty COINTELPRO war against the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. He was accused of carrying out the bombing with a group called the Frente Revolucionario Boricua, which prosecutors called a terrorist cell that operated in Chicago in support of independence for Puerto Rico, a U.S. commonwealth. No one was hurt in the blast. He was found guilty on four counts — conspiracy, attempted destruction of government property, destruction of government property and possession on illegal explosives and was immediately taken into custody. Solis will be incarcerated in the MCC until his sentencing on July 7. He faces a sentence of six to thirty years.

Solis and his attorneys denied that he had anything to do with the bombing and said the trial was an attempt by the FBI to discredit the Puerto Rican independence movement. While he supports independence, Solis said that does not make him a "terrorist."

Solis also said the government wanted him to implicate Jose Lopez, director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, in the bombing, "It's what I said all along, an attempt to try to get other people and to use me...The (FBI) told me 'you are all alone' when they arrested me. They said 'you help us and we will make all of this disappear.'"

Solis' supporters note that the jury foreman was a Federal Justice Department employee—and that the prosecution repeatedly raised the specter of "terrorism" in closing arguments. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, no federal employee could be asked to rule impartially in such a case. Solis' jury included eight whites, three blacks, and one Filipino, none of whom spoke Spanish. The jurors were asked to convict in large part based on an audiotape of a conversation between Solis and lead prosecution witness Raphael Marrero which was conducted in Spanish, forcing the jury to rely on the prosecution's bogus interpretation of those tapes.

The defense was not allowed to put the case in a political context. "You have to contextualize the political aspects of the case—including the FBI's long and notorious history of relationships with agent provocateurs like Marrero and COINTELPRO operative William O'Neal and the FBI's long-standing political campaign against the Puerto Rican nationalist movement," said his defense lawyer.

For more information, contact Sovereign Voices: The Committee in Solidarity with José Solis Jordán: P.O. Box 577826, Chicago, IL 60657-7826. (www.defendsolis.org)

Women in Black is an international movement of women for human rights. We now add our voices to this movement and initiate a monthly witnessing, demanding health care as a human right for women in California state prisons.

Third Friday of every month, Powell St. BART station (Powell and Market), San Francisco, 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM. The next ones are 6/18, 7/16, and 8/20.

For information call California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 415-255-7036 ext. 4, 100 McAllister St, San Francisco, CA 94102.

WINGS: Women's International News Gathering Service announces the 13th anniversary of providing radio news and current affairs programs by and about women around the world to noncommercial radio in the English-speaking world. To find out more about WINGS, check: www.wings.org. For more information contact: Frieda Werden, producer WINGS P.O. Box 33220 Austin TX 78764

clip and return